

DOCUMENTARY

NEWS LETTER





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From *Look and Listen's* review by

W. G. Moore, BSc.

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|---------|---------------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| 149 | QUESTIONS TO THE KRS | 158 | JEAK—A DOCUMENTARY CLOSE-UP |
| 150 | NOTES OF THE MONTH | 159 | NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS |
| 151 | EXTRACT FROM GRIERSON | 160 | CORRESPONDENCE |
| 152-154 | EDINBURGH IN REVIEW | 161 | THE DEATH OF MAJOR DOCUMENTARIES? |
| 155 | BOUQUETS DEPARTMENT | 162 | THE EDINBURGH FILM GUILD |
| 156 | SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS AT THE ASFP | 163-164 | FILM REVIEWS—DANISH |
| 157 | PRODUCTION OF A COI FILM | | |

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QUESTIONS TO THE KRS

AT THE September Council Meeting of the Kinematograph Renters' Society the Film Society movement was condemned as a 'breeding ground for the leaders of anti-film attacks'. It would be interesting to know the exact meaning of the statement, but it's not difficult to understand this sudden feeling of antagonism on the part of the KRS towards the Film Societies.

Since the arrival of the import tax, re-issues have suddenly become important—important to the renters. Up till now, the Film Societies have been big customers of re-issues and, therefore, the KRS feels a cool breeze and develops a stiff neck in that direction.

But has the KRS ever stopped seriously to think about Film Societies and about the films they show? We wonder just what the KRS knows about the matter; maybe it will not be out of order if we give here a short résumé of the development and activities of Film Societies. It might even reach the eyes of the KRS and convince them that they are conceivably looking through the wrong end of the telescope.

The Film Society movement began in England with the formation of the London Film Society in 1925. The aims were 'to show a group of films which are in a degree interesting and which represent work that has been done, or is being done, experimentally in various parts of the world'. Before the war there were 40 Societies in England but during 1939 this number dropped to 23. In 1945 an English and Welsh Federation of Film Societies was set up with the thirty members. There are now about 75 General Societies and 50 Scientific Film Societies, the latter represented by the SFA. A rough membership estimate of both ordinary and scientific groups works out at a total of about 65,000.

The Societies have had to fight their way along. Local authorities with a few exceptions (notably the London County Council) have been unco-operative. Watch Committees have been active in setting themselves up as censors over the films which the Societies wish to show. But never before have the Film Societies also had to stand out against the renters.

It is worth considering the type of programmes planned. In early days, documentary had a big place—it was through these

shows that the early work of the documentary film producers became more widely known. Russian films banned by the censors such as *Battleship Potemkin* could only be seen by members—this particular film has never had theatrical distribution in England. Modern programmes are heavily overloaded in the direction of French feature films; Danish, Czech, Italian and Russian work is included. Documentaries from all countries are shown as well as the best English features. Naturally Hollywood has a place also in the programme—'Classics' such as the *Grapes of Wrath*, *Of Mice and Men* and the Chaplin films appear time and time again.

But, in looking over all available programmes for the last year it would seem that there are very few occasions where any Film Society bills a film which has been a big box-office draw all over the country. On the other hand, many of the films shown to members and receiving the most enthusiastic receptions are ones which either have never had full theatrical distribution or have proved disappointing in terms of box-office receipts.

The average weekly attendance at the cinemas is in the neighbourhood of 20,000,000 at the worst. We have said that Film Society membership is about 65,000. Is it possible that an annual membership of 65,000 can have any effect on a weekly attendance of over 20,000,000? On the other hand, 10 million adults do not go to the cinema at all—it is reasonable to suppose that some of these people are Film Society members. We must also remember that most groups do not hold shows all the year round—the most usual arrangement appears to be fortnightly throughout the winter months. In other words, any effect which Film Society membership might have on attendance at general cinemas is very, very small and, on the whole, the members go to their Society shows to see films which they cannot see at the 'local'.

In other words may we respectfully pose two questions to the KRS on behalf of the Film Societies? These are:

- (a) What is meant by saying that the Film Society movement is a 'breeding ground for leaders of anti-film attacks'?
- (b) Do the renters feel that their interests are being threatened by the existence of Film Societies? If so, how?

NOTES OF THE MONTH

The Cover Still on this issue is the Title Card from *Chants Populaires* (No. 5) made by National Film Board of Canada

International Scientific Film Association

THE CONGRESS held in Paris from October 2nd to the 9th, 1947, arranged jointly by the Institut de Cinématographie Scientifique and the Scientific Film Association, came to a very successful conclusion with a unanimous decision by the delegates to form forthwith The International Scientific Film Association.

A provisional constitution for this new international organization, which will, of course, require subsequent ratification, was agreed by the delegates from 22 different countries.

Under this provisional constitution the International Association will have a main meeting each year, but between these main meetings, the affairs of the Association will be managed by a council comprising five officers and seven other members.

The Association will be concerned with all aspects of scientific film matters. As a start, however, to its work, it was agreed that invitations to join the Association should be sent to those countries who had not been represented at the Congress in Paris. In addition, the exchange of information through the office of the Association (which will be established in Paris at an early date) will forthwith commence on those scientific and technical films that are already available for exchange, on methods of appraisal and on Customs regulations on the exchange of films.

Moreover, following the agreement that concurrently with each annual meeting of the International Association, which will be held in different countries by invitation, there should be held a screening of new scientific and technical films, the British delegation were asked to arrange for the 1948 Congress to be held in Great Britain in October, 1948. Arrangements to this end are immediately being put in hand by the Scientific Film Association of Great Britain.

Conference in Manchester

THE Education Committee of the Scientific Film Association is holding its annual Conference in Manchester (at the University) on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, November 21st/23rd, in conjunction with the Manchester University, the City of Manchester Education Committee and the Manchester Scientific Film Society.

The subject of this year's Conference will be the Visual Unit including films, film strips, wall charts and teachers' handbooks. Two Visual Units will be shown in their entirety, one dealing with water supply and the other with local studies.

H. D. Hughes, MP, Chairman of the Committee for the Preparation and Production of Visual Aids, R. J. Thom, Secretary of the National Committee for Visual Aids in Education, and Mrs Marcouse of the Ministry of Education will speak about what has been done to develop this teaching tool and will discuss plans for the future.

Other speakers will include members of the production teams responsible for the visual units demonstrated.

We hope that the Conference will be well attended. A report of it will be included in our next issue.

Un-American

THE MOST un-American aspect of the present Congressional inquiry into un-American activities is the inquiry itself. The investigating committee seems determined to make nonsense of the very constitution of the United States. Set against the garish background of Hollywood, the investigation has recently taken on a nightmarish character. In a courtroom got up like a stage set, defending attorneys find themselves being forcibly ejected amid howls of 'throw that bum out'. Stars, with attendant trains of fans, fall over themselves in the rush to tar and feather the next man. But those who seem so anxious to pin the label of 'red' on to their colleagues are likely to find that they have stuck a far nastier label on themselves. To their credit a number of film people have come out strongly against this fantastic witch hunt. In fact, the committee may find that the glare of Hollywood publicity has shown up its activities in their true light.

Good twopence worth

CONCERN FOR the nation's culture is, unfortunately, a rare quality among political organizations. The Communist Party is, therefore, to be congratulated on its timely *Memorandum on the Film Industry*. An analysis of the present control and tendencies of the medium, and of the 75 per cent tax and the alternatives that have been suggested is followed by practical proposals designed 'not only . . . to reduce the present dollar tribute, but . . . to readjust the industry along lines restoring its national independence and ensuring a better service to the community'. Selling at twopence, this document deserves the serious consideration of all who are interested in the national and cultural values of the cinema.

We've had it too!

FURTHER TO the remark on Mr Rank which was published in a paper in the Russian sector of Berlin and reprinted by us in our last issue, we'd like to point out that Mr Rank's is not the only portion of the British film industry which comes under review. Here is a short extract from a digest of an article in *Soviet Art*. (August 15th.)

The writer begins by saying that unlike the Soviet documentary cinema, neither the American nor the English documentary cinema has ever been interested in reflecting on the screen the fundamental principles of reality, though both have attained a certain skill in the reproduction of events. The Anglo-American documentary cinema sets itself a quite different task—to stupefy the spectator with lies. For this purpose it produces, for instance, pseudo-ethnographical films with the stamp of intentional thoughtlessness upon them, showing a 'colonial paradise', these films aim to falsify reality in the most shameless way, while colonial 'feature' films, novels and essays contain the same ideology. Primitive propaganda films on the lines of film posters are also produced. Finally, there are films of an openly advertising character. No wonder that one of the British film firms engaged in the production of documentary films is subsidized by a gas company!

'Time for Enquiry' is the title of an article by John Grierson published by the Albyn Press in 'DOCUMENTARY 47'. We give below a few of the main points, but we hope that readers will read the whole article. Comments are welcomed—as an introduction we give:

A good deal of gloom surrounds the British documentary operation in this summer of 1947. I think the situation is urgent and warrants an immediate official enquiry if a great national asset is to be saved from damage, and most important needs of the State in the field of information are to be imaginatively fulfilled. But first let us see the problem in proportion.

The complaint takes various forms. Something—the best ones say—is going out of documentary, and in fact why are they so full and why did we not make such a show at Brussels as we once did with the *Song of Ceylon* and sundry other minor masterworks of the moment? Far too many units, it appears, are going into instructional work in plain avoidance of the difficulty of revealing in dramatic or poetic or other creative form, the stubborn social material of the day.

The films are slack for lack of fire, and so are the boys who make them, runs the criticism. There are shocking stories of people of talent doing nothing for a year and losing their competence. Production procedure lacks the tempo which is essential for creative work and there are endless dying delays as between the film makers, the sponsors and the people of the Treasury. Committee production, I am told, has raised its ugly head to the point where films are killed in the script by bureaucratic indecision.

It is said that the economies and administrations of the units are not always as orderly as they might be, and that many of their efforts could be better co-ordinated. It is doubted in some quarters whether production by thirty to forty units with separate overheads and sometimes insufficient resources can represent an efficient system.

I therefore suggest that the solution does not lie outside the terms of public sponsorship but, on the other hand, lies in deliberately and patiently working to make that sponsorship an imaginative sponsorship. This is where the emphasis should now lie. Criticisms which do not recognize this task, and defections which are merely impatient, do not greatly help.

There is criticism on both sides. The units charge the sponsors, and particularly the Government sponsors, with a lack of decisiveness and a lack of imagination. They say they have lost the conception of a total driving plan for the use of the documentary film in the urgent service of the nation. The sponsors, on the other hand, say that the film makers are too independent by half and cannot be relied on to deliver efficiently or even to deliver what they have undertaken to deliver, and finally that the boys are so full of small politics these days that nary a one of them has time to throw his cap over a steeples.

I agree when people say that, without imaginative support from the sponsors, imaginative films are impossible. I even sympathize a little when people talk of throwing up the Government relationship altogether and re-discovering their freedom. But I still conclude that it is a suicidal attitude and not realistic, either socially or aesthetically.

The situation calls for a new measure of mutual confidence and a new measure of leadership on both sides. As for the documentary people, I would have them count their blessings, even if they find their rations short. Where elsewhere has the documentary idea been so richly maintained even when a good deal of formless stuff which neither taught nor revealed was passed off in its good name? Where elsewhere have so many companies been maintained in such continuity of public work that they have come to expect it, no matter what administrative shapes they gave themselves?

As for the sponsors, they are fortunate at this time to have a

EXTRACT FROM GRIERSON

school of film-makers at their disposition who, whatever their foibles have made a profession of this realistic field of cinema and have remained faithful to it. With better organization, they represent an essential asset to Britain at this juncture, because there is much in these days of change which the British public needs to clear its vision and strengthen its will for the job ahead.

Perhaps the documentary people are not at the moment so vigorous in new ideas as they might be, but who, pray, is? The gap created is a spiritual one which is evident everywhere. The documentary people are part of a larger picture, and there is no great difference between the frustrations of the COI and the frustrations of the units who think they are afflicted by it. Neither are yet at the stage of seeing where the positive way of the public will lies, and who can blame them when the leaders themselves flounder in equal uncertainty? I would say that the so-called 'dullness of documentary' is not yet a disaster. Only its defection from the service of reality could be.

In this matter, the documentary people have, of necessity, to look to the brightness of their creative weapons and the methods by which they work. The situation calls for an examination of what they are doing on every level of talent to take the documentary film beyond the level of mere technical proficiency and into the world of imaginative interpretation. They cannot continue to live on the word 'documentary' itself, nor on its successful contribution to educational theory, nor on its reputation of practical achievement in the hard days of the war.

I do not want to push the point too far in a difficult situation, but I do not like the loss of direct and confident relationship between the artist and the Government official; and I am bound to think that if something is going out of documentary, it is because something has gone from its essential underpinnings. Ground has to be made up. A notable understanding of the needs of the nation is the first condition of a positive, fresh and imaginative contribution toward their fulfilment.

The second condition may lie in recognizing the need to reorganize the documentary business, and radically, from an administrative point of view. There was never a time when anyone could say of the documentary people that they took personal advantage from the work they did, or served their own comfort. I have been told a hundred times over that this was silly and that we could never hold a group together on such a basis. But the documentary people did so, and, even when my friend Lejeune speaks dividing words now, this she must allow.

Where Miss Lejeune has something, and where I must at this moment speak out, is in saying that now is not the time for complacency. I do not think the documentary people can afford the independent luxury of so many units. I do not think they can afford the present high cost of films. I do not think they can afford the present laboriousness in which a film is conceived, or the present tempo in which it is made. We cannot afford it for the simple reason that we are shooing our sponsors away.

Short of a proper enquiry, I have myself no conclusions to offer. I simply want the documentary film in Britain to be even better in the public service than it has been before. I want the documentary group to be in the vanguard of the national effort and an example of good sense and discipline in the creation of the future. Above all, I do not want the documentary group to wait around for things to happen to it from the outside, when now, as it has always done, it can write its own brave ticket. It requires, however, a special effort; and I think now, and not later, is the time for it.

The first International Festival of Documentary Films was held at Edinburgh from August 31st to September 7th, concurrently with the three weeks' Festival of Music and Drama.

Organized by the Edinburgh Film Guild, with the assistance of a widely representative committee and the co-operation of the Central Office of Information the Festival was designed: (1) To present for the first time a world view of documentary achievement by showing examples of the best realistic production from many countries, and (2) To create an opportunity for the reconsideration and re-assessment of the principles and methods of the documentary movement.

The Festival was opened by a ceremony at the Playhouse cinema on the first Sunday afternoon. Speeches of welcome were made before the films by the Rt Hon Sir John I. Falconer, Lord Provost of Edinburgh; John Grierson, Director of Mass Communications UNESCO; and Norman Wilson, Chairman of the Edinburgh Film Guild. Subsequently there was a programme of films at the Playhouse in the evening. During the following week there were twice daily film shows at the Guild Theatre, Film House, a Show at the Central Hall, Tollcross, organized by the Scottish Educational Film Association, and the Festival concluded with an afternoon and evening film show at the Playhouse cinema. In all seventy films from seventeen different countries were shown to an audience totalling over five thousand, a figure which, judging from the numbers turned away daily, would have been very much higher if more accommodation had been available at the Guild Theatre.

DNL PRESENTS EDINBURGH IN REVIEW

Introductory Note

The assessment of foreign films presents a number of problems. Obviously true criticism can only be applied in relationship to the conditions prevailing in the country of origin and the audience for which the film is intended. In the absence of such knowledge, and hampered in many cases by an ignorance of language, it is easy to underestimate the significance or effect of a film for the purpose for which it was designed. Viewed under the conditions of the Festival the impact of any film becomes a very individual matter, and it is clear that there will be frequent differences of opinion due to the varying knowledge of each viewer. A relatively unimportant film about a country or people of which one knows little, may, for example, when seen with a number of others seem more interesting than one in which the background is familiar.

In making this survey of the films shown at the Festival, the attempt has been made to keep these points in mind, but with such a large number of films to cover it has proved impossible to publish full critical reviews of every film. We have therefore been obliged to limit this survey to a short statement of the theme of the film, together with a few comments which may serve as a guide to their value, assessed from the opinions of a number of independent observers. Inevitably such comments must leave much unsaid, particularly as regards British films, many of which will be the subject of longer reviews in our regular columns, but we hope that our readers will be able to get from them some idea of the total picture which the films at the Festival presented.

No exact details of length have been obtainable; the running times given should therefore only be regarded as an indication of whether a film is a one-reeler or five. Most of the foreign films shown at the Festival are not obtainable in this country. Viewers interested in any particular film are advised to seek information from the Embassy of the country concerned.

To the team of reviewers who made this survey possible, DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER extends its thanks.

Playhouse. Sunday. August 31st. Afternoon

Opening ceremony. Films from Britain, Denmark and the USSR

1. Cumberland Story (Britain. 50 mins.)

Theme. New methods and new machinery can bring renewed life to the coal mines and new hope for the men who work there. The film tells the story of the finding and working of an old seam, lost in a mining disaster a century before.

Comment. Well made and in places exciting. Nationalization, it is implied, will do in all pits what was done in this one; but the characters never really come to life and we are left with our doubts. As a story the film holds attention; as a moral for the mining industry as a whole, it fails to convince, and the ending is flat. Why, if the film is believed, with present good intentions, with nationalization and a five-day-week, is there still so much wrong with the mining industry? There are deeper problems which this story does not tackle or even hint at.

2. The Seventh Age (Denmark. 18 mins.)

Theme. Old-age pensioners in Denmark. A survey of the system for the distribution of pensions, and arrangements made by the State to house those without resources of their own.

Comment. A balanced and satisfying account of its subject, with a commentary in English. Apart from the story it tells of a fine social service, this film is remarkable for its warmth, humanity and simple common sense. The problems of old age are shown with real understanding.

3. The Festival of Youth (USSR. 50 mins.)

Theme. The parade of national representatives of youth from every part of the USSR before the Soviet leaders in the Leningrad Stadium in 1946. Shot in Agfacolor.

Comment. For fifty minutes the eye is dazzled by a whirl of dancing and marching in some of the finest colour yet seen on the screen. But it is too long and marred by a chauvinistic

commentary in English, and too frequent reminders of Stalin. This is a record rather than a documentary film, though the attempt is made to relieve the monotony by glimpses of the countries from which each group comes.

The Playhouse. Sunday evening

Films from Poland, Australia, Britain and France

1. Native Earth (Australia. 14 mins.)

Theme. Australian colonial administration in New Guinea. The film discusses the exploitation of the natives before the war; shows the part which they played during it, and ends with the attempts now being made to develop them for self-government.

Comment. A frank and fast-moving account, which, though in places faintly self-righteous, makes its points well without over-elaboration.

2. Student at Breslau (Poland. 11 mins.)

Theme. The rebuilding of university life in war-torn Poland. The students themselves repair their halls and lecture rooms. Everything is short, so alongside their studies even the students must work for their living at ordinary jobs. But life is not all work, and there are lighter moments when the students, like youth everywhere, dance and flirt.

Comment. Direction and camera-work poor. To British eyes the film is dull and unimaginative. An understanding of the commentary would have helped. In Poland the film probably has a considerable propaganda value.

3. A String of Beads (Britain. 28 mins.)

Theme. Love in the tea gardens of Assam. Boy buys beads for his girl in the market. A marriage is arranged and a baby is born.

Comment. A simple lyrical story with superb photography and commentary. The film gives no real picture of life in Assam—but it was not intended to; within its own terms of reference, it is a fine piece of filmcraft.

4. Farrebique (France. 96 mins.)

Theme. The life of a peasant family through the four seasons of the year on a farm in south-western France. Every detail is followed, births, deaths, the rotation of crops and the perennial question as to whether the farm shall be rebuilt.

Comment. This is a film of the earth earthy. Everything is real even to the patois dialect—which apparently the French themselves cannot understand. Sensitive, slow as the people themselves, packed with a lyrical symbolism, this film is redolent of a nostalgia for the land. Whether you like it, is a matter of taste. Either you will think it a piece of arty fandango which goes on too long, or you will think it a masterpiece.

Guild Theatre. Monday, 2.30 and 8

Films from Yugoslavia, Australia, France, Britain and the United Nations Organization

1. Youth Railway (Yugoslavia. 40 mins.)

Theme. Many regions of Yugoslavia have been unconnected for centuries by any but the most primitive forms of transport. To bring the railway into Eastern Bosnia after the war, youth brigades from every part of the country are mobilized. The film shows how these young men and women succeeded in their job with only the simplest tools.

Comment. Wasteful of its natural drama, this film is crude and repetitive, but it impresses by its raw vitality. If the English commentator could have ceased her exhortations for a moment to allow the camera to speak for itself the result might have been a film of major importance. Nevertheless as a record of how something valuable was created, and as a reminder of what can be done by sheer enthusiasm, the film has a lasting effect.

2. *Indonesia Calling* (Australia, 20 mins.)

Theme. When, after the war, the Dutch were trying to reconquer Indonesia and suppress the Republic, the Australian waterfront workers struck to prevent the sailing of ships carrying soldiers and war material. The film tells the story of how this strike, supported by seamen of many colours and nationalities, halted the Dutch effort at a critical time and gave the Indonesians a breathing space.

Comment. Made under conditions of considerable difficulty, this film has rough edges. As a record of international co-operation in a common cause, it is stimulating and exciting.

3. *The People's Charter* (United Nations Organization, 20 mins.)

Theme. An account of the world needs that brought the United Nations Organization into existence. The film tells how the charter was signed, and appeals to ordinary people everywhere to make it work.

Comment. Built up from library material in a *March of Time* style, the film has a disproportionate significance against the background of present international politics. If its message is laboured too long, the language, at least, is one that is understood in the cinemas.

4. *Amassins d'Eau Douce* (France, 20 mins.)

Theme. Internecine warfare at the bottom of a pond.

Comment. As a photographic record of the struggle for existence between the minute creatures, who live at the bottom of ponds, this film is a considerable achievement. Horrible to watch, the raucous jazz accompaniment seemed unnecessary.

5. *Le Tempestaire* (France, 22 mins.)

Theme. A story of Breton life.

Comment. A tedious anecdote, lit occasionally by beautiful shots of the rocky coast.

6. *The Infantryman* (Britain, 20 mins.)

Theme. The place of the Infantryman in the British army. His duties and his importance to other arms of the force.

Comment. One of a series made for the War Office, the film attempts to cover too much ground. For its intended audience it may have had some value; there was little for a Festival audience.

7. *Chasing the Blues* (Britain, 8 mins.)

Theme. The importance of welfare in the cotton mills.

Comment. A lively and amusing film which uses a mixture of cartoon *satirality* and superimposition to make its points. A pleasant change from objective documentary.

Guild Theatre, Tuesday, 2.30 and 8

A programme predominantly about Scotland. One film from Sweden.

1. *Progress Report* (Scotland, 10 mins.)

Theme. Rehousing in Glasgow.

Comment. Simple reportage—from the word go the film leaps ahead with facts and figures of temporary and permanent building in district after district. Housing statistics are not usually very memorable; the film does little to make them more so.

2. *Paddy's Milestone* (Scotland, 34 mins.)

Theme. The island of Ailsa Craig, whose rock provides the world's supply of curling stones.

Comment. Beginning in pre-history, the film passes in succession from a study of life on Ailsa Craig to the cutting of its rock for curling stones; thence to the mainland, where they are finished, and ends with a study of the game of curling. This is interesting material, and some of the sequences are well made, but there is enough here for several films. The facetious and discursive commentary is irritating.

3. *Caller Herring* (Scotland, 20 mins.)

Theme. Herring from sea to table. Modern methods for canning, curing and freezing which are providing a sound economic basis for the industry.

Comment. It is difficult today to be original about trawling; wisely this film does not attempt any novel approach. Telling a straightforward story, it does a competent job, and, in the sequences on the preserving of herring, adds something to one's knowledge.

4. *Country Policeman* (Scotland, 20 mins.)

Theme. The life of a country policeman in a rural district of Scotland.

Comment. Apparently the policeman's lot here is a happy one. A pleasant solid film, with a touch here and there of humour, but what opportunities are lost for a real human study.

5. *North-East Corner* (Scotland, 20 mins.)

Theme. Life in the north-east corner of Scotland.

Comment. A fine study which moves gracefully from the trawlers on the coast to the mechanized farmers inland, pausing en route to look in on Aberdeen. A sensitive film which achieves a genuine flavour of the land and its people.

6. *The Glen is Ours* (Scotland, 30 mins.)

Theme. Local Government. Shall the Glen be preserved for the people or sold for commercial exploitation. The votes decide.

Comment. This is a staged production, which alternately appals by its vulgarity and entertains by a display of genuine comedy. As fact, it is nonsense; as fiction, it is fun—and the message goes over. Whether you like it or hate it, there is no doubt of its value for cinema audiences. The greatest weakness is the improbable acting of some of the characters.

7. *Sunshine Over Snow* (Sweden, 10 mins.)

Theme. Life in the wilds of Lapland. Owls, mice and bears. Small boy hunting birds is frightened by the bear. He runs home. Father hunts the bear with rifle and dog. Night falls. The bear attacks the dog. Dog and hunter go home leaving the bear lord of the land.

Comment. A brilliant short film, sensitively observed, photographed, and put together. Picture and sound combine to give the magic of a fairy tale to a few tiny incidents in the life of a far distant people. An object lesson to film makers, this was one of the outstanding delights of the Festival.

Guild Theatre, Wednesday, 2.30 and 8

Mainly Canadian films, with contributions from Poland, USA, Denmark and Switzerland

1. *Fiddle-De-Dee*2. *La Poulette Grist*3. *Cadet Roussel* (Canada, Each 7 mins.)

These three colour productions by Norman McLaren were one of the surprises of the Festival. *Fiddle-De-Dee* is an experiment in the abstract; pattern, shapes, line and colour dance across the screen to the theme of a lively tune, played upon a violin. A film which leaves you dazed, breathless and excited. *La Poulette Grist* and *Cadet Roussel* are cartoons illustrating popular French-Canadian folk songs. Most people are allergic to songs on the screen, but these films open new fields; the quaint drawings are a delight to the eye and fit perfectly to the mood and the words of the songs. They make you sing too!

4. *Accidents Don't Happen Nos. 3 and 4* (Canada, 10 mins.)

Theme. Safety first in factories. How to avoid accidents by taking common-sense precautions.

Comment. Using a comedy character who does everything wrong, these films are slick and fast moving. One may wonder whether sarcastic comedy is the best way of making people think, but at least they are genuinely funny. As such they will be remembered when a dozen films of serious exhortation would be forgotten.

5. *Klee Wyck* (Canada, 20 mins.)

Theme. The life and work of the Canadian painter Emily Carr.

Comment. An interesting but maddening film. Emily Carr is clearly an exciting painter. As an introduction to her work the film has great value; but the commentator oversells the story, and the continual close shots never allow a moment to reflect upon her work as a whole. Made in Kodachrome.

6. *A Feeling of Rejection* (Canada, 23 mins.)

Theme. Social maladjustment. The psychoneurotic causes behind the inability to make friends and enjoy social contacts.

Comment. For its theme the film takes the story of a lonely girl, who develops symptoms of headache and lassitude in consequence of her inability to cope with her social environment. In flashback we see the story of her early life and the way in which her over-anxious mother dominates her natural reactions. Naturally the film over-simplifies the issues, but if films about psychiatry are to be made, this is one which will give food for thought to neurotics and parents alike. Less commentary would have been an advantage; there are some things which the audience should be left to discover for themselves through a purely visual technique.

7. *Warsaw Suite* (Poland, 30 mins.)

Theme. Destruction and rebuilding in Poland.

Comment. For this theme the Poles have chosen to use a pure impressionistic technique. Here is every trick of the early cinema—buildings from every angle, masks and linear filters, reflections in water, figures against the sky, disembodied hands and feet, all against a background of the three sections of a symphonic tone poem. For a British audience, trained in a factual approach this symbolism is romantic and arty. But there are sections which are genuinely moving, and it has the advantage, for an overseas audience, of relying on a purely visual technique. It is a measure of the skill of its composition that at the end one realizes that it carried not one word of commentary nor needed any.

8. *Boundary Lines* (USA, 10 mins.)

Theme. The artificial barriers that divide man from man, race from race and people from people.

Comment. Using a wealth of devices, this colour 'cartoon' is an intelligent and imaginative attempt to illustrate the point that 'a line is only an idea'; it can be what we make it. Simply and clearly the film moves from point to point, showing the futility of barriers, building up its argument and its appeal for individual, national and international co-operation to the final consequences of failure—the destruction of mankind itself through the atomic bomb. As a presentation of the personal aspect of the world's racial problems, it is entirely successful. Technically superb, this is a brilliant and stimulating film.

9. *People's Holiday* (Denmark, 15 mins.)

Theme. The facilities available for Danish workers to enjoy their holidays.

Comment. This, another in the series of films dealing with the Danish social services, shows the contributory schemes for holiday arrangements on an individual or camp basis, and the attempts being made to get a better mutual understanding between town and country by organizing holidays for townfolk on farms. Although rather wandering and confused in places by attempting too much, the film succeeds in getting over a real picture of the people of Denmark and how they enjoy themselves.

10. *Le Souverain* (Switzerland, 20 mins.)

Theme. The life of a small community in a Swiss valley.

Comment. This is a straightforward film which, by choosing a few scenes from the life of farmer Lichtenberg's family and picturing them vividly, succeeds in giving a rounded picture of the life and spirit of the people in this Swiss valley. The few scenes of a village council settling the question of whether it is in the interest of all for a road to go through the farmer's land is an object lesson in democracy, which goes over better than any fireworks or exhortations. And their sports are amusing; was golf after all not a Scottish invention?

Guild Theatre, Thursday, 2.30 and 8

Films from Britain, India, Australia, USA, Switzerland and Palestine

1. *Here is the Gold Coast* (Britain, 40 mins.)

Theme. The economic, agricultural and administrative problems of the Gold Coast and the way in which the Colonial Government is trying to deal with them.

Comment. This is a comprehensive survey of a little-known colony which holds the attention in spite of its length. The film gives an impression of objective analysis, which is strengthened by the absence of any sense of complacency and the use of a native-born commentator.

2. *Bassein* (India, 10 mins.)

Theme. A day in the life of an Indian fisherman in a Christian-Indian community.

Comment. A simple story attractively photographed.

3. *School in the Mail Box* (Australia, 20 mins.)

Theme. The vast distances which separate many Australian families from each other have led to the organization of a children's correspondence school, which teaches them by means of the post and the radio.

Comment. A fascinating story, efficiently but unimaginatively treated.

4. *The Blue Riband* (USA, 20 mins.)

Theme. The 4 H Agricultural Clubs, which give training and advice to young American farmers.

Comment. There is more than a hint here of Hollywood. The theme is lost in a pompous story about the insufferable Williams family and their aim to win the Blue Riband prize at the local agricultural show. Everyone is happy and smug in an American paradise—none the less, technically a competent job.

5. *Lucerne* (Switzerland, 15 mins.)

Theme. The attractions of Lucerne and its musical festival.

Comment. A travelogue which tells you almost nothing about the musical festival, all that you could want to know about Lucerne and which would almost certainly deter you from visiting it. Adequately photographed but confusingly constructed.

6. *House in the Desert* (Palestine, 27 mins.)

Theme. A story of Jewish co-operative achievement in Palestine. How schemes of flooding and irrigation succeeded in converting the desert of the Dead Sea into fertile land for settlement.

Comment. It is understandable that, in the present situation, the Jews should feel the need to stress their achievements in Palestine. But with such a theme, it is a pity that the treatment is not more restrained; over-dramatization tends to weaken the effect. In spite of this defect, this is an exciting and well made film.

Guild Theatre. Friday, 2.30 and 8

Films from Australia, Denmark, Italy, Czechoslovakia and Britain

1. Men Wanted (Australia, 15 mins.)

Theme. Life in Australia and the opportunities offered for betterment by learning a skilled trade.

Comment. As a film to encourage immigration this film would not seem very successful; well made, but it lacks the fire of conviction, and shows once again the difficulty of using a personal story to illustrate a general theme. This story of a British sailor, who settles in Australia and is persuaded by his girl friend to learn a skilled trade so that they can get married, never comes to life.

2. Health for Denmark (Denmark, 20 mins.)

Theme. The organisation of the Danish Sick Club system, and the hospital facilities it provides.

Comment. A human and likeable film, which tells its story in a clear simple fashion. Notable for its touches of humour and sympathetic direction.

3. The Church of St George (Czechoslovakia, 20 mins.)

Theme. The Czech national shrine in the Church of St George, Prague.

Comment. A good example of what can be done by lighting and camera work to reproduce the emotional effect of a static architectural subject. This is a film which, in spite of its excellencies, remains dull to an overseas audience, who do not possess the background of traditional interest.

4. Piazza San Marco (Italy, 15 mins.)

Theme. A study of the art and architecture on the buildings in the Piazza San Marco in Florence.

Comment. In lesser hands this would be just another travelogue. A superb use of camera and lighting succeeds in holding attention, and results in a film which is remembered.

5. The Water Garden (Czechoslovakia, 10 mins.)

Theme. A nature study of pond flowers and the insects which visit them.

Comment. Superb colour gives many of the shots of this study a startling beauty. Unfortunately, designed presumably for children, it is made exasperating for adults by the silly and whimsical English commentary.

6. A Modern Guide to Health (Britain, 10 mins.)

Theme. Simple health tips on posture, sensible clothing, exercise and sleep.

Comment. An amusing and entertaining cartoon, which puts its points over well.

7. Bambini in Citta (Italy, 15 mins.)

Theme. How the children of Italian cities live and play.

Comment. A brilliant and delightful study. The film has no social message to offer, but it succeeds in capturing the spirit of childhood. These urchins watch the sights, play and get up to mischief, not only in the cities of Italy, but in every city of every country in the world.

(This programme was to have included the film *Les Quatre Saisons* from Belgium. Unfortunately by error the film sent from Belgium was an English one of the same name, sub-titled in French and Flemish.)

On the same evening a showing of films was arranged by the Scottish Educational Film Association at the Central Hall, Tolkross. The programme comprised *Air Mail* and *Documentary of Achievement* from South Africa; *Accidents Don't Happen* and *Vegetable Insects* from Canada; *Boundary Lines* from the USA; and *Latitude and Longitude* from Britain. Some of these films were included in other programmes and are commented upon above. No comments are available on the others at the time of going to press.

Guild Theatre. Saturday afternoon

Films from Poland, Switzerland, the USA, Sweden, Denmark and Britain

1. Easter in Lowicz (Poland, 10 mins.)

Theme. Easter customs in the town of Lowicz.

Comment. This is a pleasant, simple film, which succeeds in catching something of the character of the people, and of the mixture of piety, superstition, and plain high spirits that are often found in peasant communities at a time of religious festival.

2. The Balance (Britain, 10 mins.)

Theme. Britain's overseas trade. The reason for need to balance imports and exports.

Comment. An excellent short film for its purpose. Actuality and diagram are skilfully blended to give a clear and concise summary of the essential facts.

3. La Vierge (Switzerland, 10 mins.)

Theme. Mountain climbing on Swiss peaks.

Comment. This is an interesting and well made film, which explains the technique of mountaineering. Notable for a skilful use of the camera to heighten the climber's sense of isolation and suspense.

4. High Plain (USA, 15 mins.)

Theme. The life of the primitive people, who live on the high plateaux of Bolivia.

Comment. Factually the life of these people—a mixture of ancient Indian and Spanish—is interesting. But told in a happy travelogue vein, the picture presented is superficial and casual. One cannot believe in the kindness of the benevolent landlord, who, in such a poor and primitive land, exacts no money from his tenants—contenting himself only with his right to their work for just three days of the week.

5. Locomotive (Poland, 20 mins.)

Theme. The devastation of the railways and rolling stock in Poland after the war, and the efforts being made to repair them.

Comment. This was the best of the Polish films. Clearly designed both to stimulate railway workers to greater efforts and to inform the public of the reason why they have to put up, temporarily, with such shocking conditions of travel. For this purpose it would appear to be a very good film. Relying to a great extent on fast moving montage, the film achieves a considerable emotional effect, which can even surmount the difficulty of language and background.

6. What Will Happen (Sweden, 10 mins.)

Theme. The training facilities available for Swedish youth when they leave school.

Comment. An uninspired survey, which painstakingly examines a great variety of trades. No doubt of some value for its intended audience.

7. Good Mothers (Denmark, 15 mins.)

Theme. The story of the Mother-Help Organization in Denmark, which cares particularly for unmarried mothers.

Comment. A vivid and human film about one of the most ignored problems of our social system. The choice of a single illustrative case leaves us, however, with a feeling of an incomplete picture of the system as a whole. There are questions unanswered upon which we should have liked to know more.

8. Les Voyages de Jadis a Aujourd'hui (Switzerland, 20 mins.)

Theme. The development of the Swiss railways from their early chaotic beginnings to nationalization and electrification.

Comment. As a story of how a small country succeeded by popular vote in producing an efficient nationalized public service, this film is interesting. The material, however, is not such as to inspire a very high quality of film making.

9. Home and School (Britain, 22 mins.)

Theme. A new approach to teaching and parenthood. By learning to understand their children and the why of their actions, parents can get the confidence and companionship of their children, and the teachers will find them more ready to learn.

Comment. To deal with this theme the film tells a story of a small suburban family, who by good fortune have sent their children to a progressive school. The contrast between their behaviour at home and at school leads the parents to discover the key to a happy relationship with them. This is an impressive example of the acted story documentary, which develops its theme clearly and logically. The children are excellent, but are these middle-class people really typical of England?

Guild Theatre. Saturday evening

Films from the USA, Italy, Britain, and Australia

1. Round Trip (USA, 10 mins.)

Theme. International trade. Its importance to America.

Comment. The film tries to explain why protective tariffs are harmful to national interests. In fast moving sequences the film cross-questions and argues with people in different jobs, countries and positions of life. This is an all-out effort; eye and ear are assaulted continuously by every device of sound and camera. In the end, sad to say, the point gets lost in confusion. A pity, because this film has something important to say and tries hard to say it. Concerned primarily with American problems, it is possible that to an American, steeped in isolationism, the point would be clearer.

2. The School (USA, 20 mins.)

Theme. A day in the life of a small-town American school.

Comment. Steeped in sickly sentiment, this film looks as though it were shot by an amateur, who got caught in a school by a rainstorm and had nothing better to do.

3. Pascoli Etsani (Italy, 10 mins.)

Theme. Life among the sheep farmers of northern Italy. Methods of cheese making from sheep's milk.

Comment. A simple and well-made little film, which gives a real picture of the way these people live.

4. Dover Spring, '47 (Britain, 10 mins.)

Theme. Replanning and rehousing in Dover since the war.

Comment. An intelligent attempt to present housing statistics in an entertaining form. Not entirely successful, it is nevertheless a pleasant change from the usual documentary approach to this sort of subject.

5. Watch Over Japan (Australia, 10 mins.)

Theme. The Australian occupation of Japan.

Comment. This film does little more than confirm our knowledge of the fact that there are Australian troops in Japan. Of the country and of what is being done by the occupation forces there is no hint. Technically it would appear to have been compiled from news-reels.

5. Learning by Experience (Britain, 34 mins.)

Theme. A study of children's behaviour under different circumstances.

Comment. This is a film designed for teachers in training to provide material for discussion and study. For this purpose it would seem an interesting experiment, which needs a closer study than can be given in a brief space. The children are quite unselfconscious and the commentary is confined to plain statements and questions—the answers are left to the viewer.

7. A Thousand Million a Year (Britain, 10 mins.)

Theme. The work of the Department of Customs and Excise.

Comment. Cut down, for theatrical purposes, from a longer version, this film presents an uninspired and disjointed account of what could have been a fascinating story.

8. The Magic Globe—Czechoslovakia (Britain, 15 mins.)

Theme. Aspects of life in Czechoslovakia which will appeal to children.

Comment. This film, made for the Children's Cinema Clubs, is one of a series which attempts to show British children something of the life of people in other countries. For this purpose two children pay a visit to Czechoslovakia by means of a 'magic' film carpet. As one might expect there is nothing here very profound, but the film is well made and in places visually almost exciting. Children will certainly be interested—whether they will be any the wiser about Czechoslovakia is another matter.

The Playhouse. Sunday afternoon

Films from Sweden, Britain and Denmark

1. Rhythm of the City (Sweden, 20 mins.)

Theme. The city and the people of Stockholm.

Comment. This is a film of great beauty. It makes no startling discoveries, it tells no facts. But here, skilfully blended with deep understanding and equality photographed, are a series of small incidents in the life of the people of a great city. This, a film without words, speaks in a language which will be understood by ordinary people the world over.

2. The World is Rich (Britain, 45 mins.)

Theme. Over a large part of the earth people are starving; yet the resources of the world could provide for them all if there were proper provision for distribution and storage of surplus, and if up-to-date methods of agriculture were employed in countries still farming by primitive methods. The film appeals for international co-operation to make the World Food Organization, which sets out to solve these problems, a success.

Comment. Using the technique of interview, library material and diagram, which was so successful in the earlier *World of Plenty*, this film builds up its argument with relentless logic and urgency. In the matter of food supplies, one of the world's greatest problems, there is only one choice of this generation to make—international co-operation or hunger followed by crime, disease and war. No criticism of detail can obscure the fact that this is one of the most important films of today.

3. Your Freedom is at Stake (Denmark, 30 mins.)

Theme. Denmark under the Nazi domination.

Comment. This is not only the story of the Danish Resistance movement, it is a history of the rise and fall of Hitler and the Nazi Party. As an historic document the film is unique, for this is no reconstruction—it was actually shot during the war under the eyes of the Gestapo. As might be expected from such a compilation, the results are uneven; without an understanding of the Danish commentary, the

Bouquets Department

THIS IS THE FILM TREATMENT FOR



PLEASE MAY WE HAVE YOUR COMMENTS QUICKLY—
IF POSSIBLE WITHIN

Film productions have to be made to a schedule.

Any delay means idle time for technicians; and
idle time means that the technicians lose their
enthusiasm, and the Government loses money.

DNL has long thought of organizing a Bouquets Department. What more appropriate time to start than the Xmas issue? Particularly when the Central Office of Information has risen to the occasion with the brand new folder reproduced alongside.

This is not to say that *DNL* will not very hastily organize a Kick-in-the-Pants Department for any future occasion when blame may be more applicable than praise.

When we look at the COI folder we like to think of all the people who will in future receive COI treatments inside its beautifully striped cover.

We like to think of them creeping like snails unwillingly into their offices one cold, raw, austerity winter's morning when a delicious, tasty fog has settled happily down on their Monday breakfast of household milk and inadequately reconstituted egg—we like to think of the new energy which will spring from their chilblained fingers and their frost-bound brains when they find the latest COI treatment lying happily on their desks in all its attractive black, white and yellow splendour.

They will read the pep-talk at the foot of the folder—they will analyse it phrase by phrase as they have been trained to do.

They will learn that 'film productions have to be made to a schedule'; they may wonder 'How?' and 'Why?' and 'What schedule?' and 'By whom?'—but that's neither here nor there.

They will realize that 'any delay means idle time for technicians'; Ideas for the Occupation of the Idle Times of Technicians will flash through their brains—Knitting Woollens for Export out of Camera Tape, Making Celluloid Collars for Film Magnates out of dud Film Stock and many other profitable and time-consuming occupations.

They will ponder on the fact that 'idle time means that the technicians lose their enthusiasm' and may be constrained to consider a Memorandum (or even Memoranda) on Occupational Therapy for the Return of Enthusiasm to Technicians.

And then, with a jolt, they will come to the crux, the *coup d'etat* of the whole matter... with horror dawning on their faces and fright suddenly dispelling the remnants of the dried egg and the tasty morning fog, they come to the last, the fatal statement—'the Government loses money'.

Seriously, though, *DNL* welcomes the innovation both as a means of hurrying on matters which tend to stagnate and as a sign that COI can show originality in idea and design. We love the Unemployed Technicians and we like the whole conception. May it prove its worth in results.

WIDESPREAD INTEREST AND CONFLICTING PRESS REACTIONS FOLLOWED THE REMARKABLE SPEECH

MADE BY

SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS

at the Annual Luncheon of the

ASSOCIATION OF SPECIALIZED FILM PRODUCERS

We print it in full below

THE EARLIEST line of film production in which we as a people made our mark was the short documentary film. British documentaries were widely recognized as being in a class of their own but unfortunately the general public either failed to appreciate this fact or having appreciated it were unable to give due encouragement to the carrying on of the good work.

As a result the specialized film producers and other short film producers have found it difficult to maintain their output.

During the war the position was different because the demands of the Government through the Ministry of Information were large and continuous and managed to keep all the available units pretty fully occupied.

Now that the expenditure upon all Government propaganda has had to be cut down the need has arisen for alternative forms of production for a number of Film Units who cannot any longer expect to work full time on Government contracts. To some extent this can be made good by the private sponsored films which some industrialists are enlightened enough to demand as part of their general advertising programme. I hope, too, that some of the new nationalized industries and services will be using this method of publicity to put across the ideas which they need to communicate both to their own employees and to the public.

All these are most useful functions which the specialized film producers can perform for the country but they will not in themselves, I believe, be sufficient to maintain in stable circumstances the number of units that are capable and willing to do the work.

Sooner or later we must somehow or other give the public an opportunity of seeing the output of these units, an output which I am convinced the ordinary person would enjoy more than many of the second features which now disgrace our screens. As your chairman knows this is a matter upon which I have been very keen for a long time, but it is easier to be keen about it than to devise a means of bringing it about.

Several conditions will have to be observed if we are to accomplish what I would like to see, which is that high quality British shorts should replace a lot of the low quality second features which are at present being shown.

The first is that the producers of the shorts should be quite convinced that what they produce for this purpose must be entertainment and not education. You cannot and should not try to force down the throats of people who have paid to be entertained what you consider is good for them by way of education.

That does not mean debasing the quality of short films—for on the whole the public has good judgment as to quality, much better I believe than some of the exhibitors give them credit for!

It is a curious fact that whether you are dealing with film exhibitors or buyers of consumer goods they all tend to place the taste of the public much lower than it really is and they are often surprised and slightly resentful when they discover that they are wrong. I am not, of course, referring to all exhibitors, but to a widespread tendency amongst exhibitors. I, myself, believe that

the best will always justify itself in the public estimation provided it is not used to deceive the public—as for instance by pretending you are out to entertain them when really your design is to educate them. The first point then is that you must produce genuine entertainment. This does not debar you from the documentary technique—indeed it is that very element which can in itself make the entertainment value especially when it can form a pleasant contrast to the feature technique in a single programme.

Second, a proper place must be found in the programmes for shorts—British or otherwise—of this nature. So long as the second feature is insisted upon and no one will build up a programme on any other basis it is almost impossible to put a short into the programme. Two features and the newsreel fill up the whole programme. My own belief is that a more attractive programme could be made—at least from time to time—by replacing the second feature by two or more really good shorts.

Third, there must be enough of the receipts left over after paying for the first feature to allow a reasonable sum to pay for the shorts. We don't want quickies or bad shorts, nor do we need short films on which extravagant sums have been spent. We do need, however, to recognize that good shorts must cost a certain amount and that they cannot be made unless a reasonable return can be obtained by the producers.

The latter two of these requirements are a matter for the exhibitors primarily and for the renters and I hope very much that one of the large circuits may lead the way in this encouragement of the peculiarly British capacity for making good short films.

I have sought, as you know Mr Chairman, to bring together the circuits and the producers of short films on some such basis as I have sketched out but I fear that so far my aims have not succeeded.

I know that some of you—in fact probably all of you—feel that a great deal could be done towards this end by legislation. I think it is true that something can be done but not, I fear, everything. It is not any easy matter to balance out the interests of the very many competing interests in exhibition, renting and production while at the same time guarding the interest of the public and the economic interests of the nation.

However much I, as an individual, might desire to assist one particular branch of the whole cinema organization I must, as a Minister and as responsible to Parliament, try to give a fair deal to all the conflicting interests. I hope, however, when you see the draft of the new Bill you will not be wholly disappointed with our intention and it will, of course, always be possible for Parliament to amend the Bill when it comes before it.

It may be that some of our present difficulties as to dollar payments will not react too unfavourably upon your organization for we certainly must do all we can to produce in this country as many dollar savers as possible and I shall also hope that some of your productions will find their place amongst our exports to other countries.

I am a very great believer in films for educational and propaganda purposes and though we cannot spend the more or less unlimited sums upon them that we did during the war I am certain that under the right conditions and given the right films they are the most powerful means of spreading essential knowledge that we possess. The visual demonstration of facts in an attractive form is, I believe, the easiest and most certain way of getting them across to the public. The film suffers, however, from one serious disability in this rapidly changing world and that is the time that must be occupied between the determination of the need to explain a particular aspect of our lives to the people and the completion and showing of a film for that purpose.

Anything that we can do and you can do to shorten that period would vastly increase the utility of films for mass education purposes.

Though we have gone a long way in developing short films for this purpose you will not, I am sure, rest upon your oars. There is

a great deal yet that we can do to meet new situations by new methods. This is an ever-developing art which must be strongly influenced by the ever-changing needs of our situation and just as many of you have done a great work in the past to widen and develop the appeal of your work to the public, so I am sure you will all of you continue in that good work. You have always shown yourselves great servants of the public and of the nation more interested in the benefits you can bring to society and in the honesty of your art than in your profits or personal gain.

It is that spirit which has shown itself in your films and has been widely recognized as placing them high in the realm of film production.

May you continue in that same purpose and may the ever-growing recognition of your contribution to the art and life of our nation bring you the security and stability which you rightly seek for your production units.

PRODUCTION HISTORY OF A COI FILM

reprinted from the August issue of Monthly Review—the official organ of the Films' Division of the Central Office of Information

THIS imaginary history of a typical COI film may be of interest. It shows the many stages through which every film has to go before the show copy appears on the screen. This history is untypical in one thing only: everything goes smoothly. The treatment, shooting script and roughcut are approved without any drastic alterations and the financial arrangements go through without a hitch. Often, alas, the history of a production is not so straightforward as this.

(1) The Ministry of Help writes to Films Division saying that they urgently require a short film on Industrial Exteriosis, for non-theatrical showing to factory workers and study groups.

(2) The Chief Production Officer talks to the Production Controlling Officer handling that Ministry and they agree the film will help the public's morale considerably, if only it can be made quickly enough. They decide that it sounds like a two-reeler, costing about £4,000, and that it seems the sort of film Nadir Films might well make, if only Hector Bathos is free to direct it.

(3) The Director approves the project.

(4) The PCO starts a production file called 'Industrial Exteriosis', rings up Hector Bathos and finds that he is free, and arranges a briefing meeting with the Ministry of Help.

(5) The briefing meeting is attended by the PCO, Bathos, the Public Relations Officer at the Ministry of Help, and the experts on Exteriosis. They decide that the film must be aimed primarily at foremen and charge hands, that it should be two reels, with a straight commentary, and that it should present the positive aspects of exteriosis in a thoroughly popular style. After the meeting, Bathos and the PCO have a drink together and exchange ideas.

(6) The PCO writes a minute to the Production Contracts Section, asking for Nadir Films to be commissioned for a two-reel treatment on 'Industrial Exteriosis', at a fee of £65. Production Contracts recommend this proposal to Finance Division, who approve it. Production Contracts then send a formal commissioning letter to Nadir Films.

(7) At the instigation of the PCO, the Ministry of Help write a formal request letter to Films Division, asking them to produce a two-reel film on 'Industrial Exteriosis' at a cost not exceeding £4,000. The PCO minutes this to Production Contracts, who minute it to Finance Division, who ask the Treasury for authority to make the film. The Treasury, after some thought, give their authority.

(8) Hector Bathos sends in his treatment. The PCO discusses it with him, and he rewrites the first sequence. The PCO then discusses the treatment with the Chief Production Officer and the director. As a result, Bathos rewrites the first sequence again, so that it's almost exactly as it was in the first place.

(9) The PCO sends copies of the treatment to the Ministry of Help. After a fortnight, a meeting is held at the Ministry to discuss the treatment. After much argument about the true nature of exteriosis, the Ministry approves the treatment, except that the character on page 3 should be a woman and not a man.

(10) The PCO gets Nadir Films commissioned for a shooting-script, in the same way as they were commissioned for a treatment. At the same time he has a quiet word with Bathos about that first sequence, which he's still not happy about.

(11) Nadir Films send in the shooting-script. This again is discussed by the PCO the Chief Production Officer and the Director, and approved with some small alterations.

(12) Nadir Films send in a budget for the production, totalling £3,950. The PCO discusses it with the Production Contracts. Production Contracts have a word with the Business Manager of Nadir, crosses off two weeks' salaries for editing and recommends the contract to Finance Division at £3,895. Finance Division authorize the budget, and Production Contracts send out an official contract letter to Nadir Films.

(13) Nadir go ahead and shoot the film. When they've got it to rough-cut stage, they bring it up to the COI and show it to the PCO, with Bathos

reading the commentary. The PCO asks for two shots to be interchanged, and insists on cutting out the phrase 'breaking bottlenecks' in the commentary. Then the rough-cut is shown to the Director, the Chief Production Officer and the Technical Production Officer. As a result of their comments, the whole of the first sequence is cut out and replaced by a single close-up of exteriosis in action. Finally, the rough-cut is shown to the Ministry of Help, who like it very much indeed. At this last meeting it is decided that the final title for the film shall be 'A Stitch in Time'.

(14) Nadir record the commentary, complete the film and deliver the show copy to Films Division. The Technical Production Officer sees the show copy, to check the quality of recording and printing, and gives it his OK.

(15) As the film is for non-theatrical showing in factories, Home Non-Theatrical Distribution estimate how many 35 mm. and 16 mm. prints will be needed and order them from the laboratory. At the same time, they forewarn the Regional Film Officers that they will be getting the film very soon now.

(16) The prints arrive. Some are placed in the Central Film Library, some are sent straight out to the Regional Film Officers.

(17) The Regional Film Officer for the North-North-East includes the film in his next factory show. The projectionist reports that the film went down extremely well, especially the funny bit at the end.

There the story ends for the moment. But the film will go on being shown non-theatrically, to different audiences, for a year or more. Scientific Film Societies with their own projectors will borrow copies from the Central Film Library (unfortunately the film is not suitable for schools). And the Technical Production Officer will have it dubbed into a dozen foreign languages, and the Overseas Distribution Sections will help to arrange for the film to be shown in every country which, like ours, has a big exteriosis problem.

PHILIP MACKIE, Films Division

JEAK—A DOCUMENTARY CLOSE-UP OF A. E. JEAKINS

The Story by Frank Sainsbury

WHEN I first knew Jeak, in 1935, documentary was very far from being the moneyed business that it is today. In the evenings the boys used to repair to Patmacs in Soho Street, one of the series of repulsive pubs that we seem to have a fatal knack for discovering. And as the directors, with their untold wealth of £8 and even £10 a week, crowded to the bar and expansively bought rounds of draught Bass at 4½d. a time and Whiskies (Black and White of course) at 8d. (or was it 9d.) we 35s. a week assistants hung respectfully in the background until we found out if we were in the round too. If unlucky, we would pair off and buy each other halves of mild. In this way Jeak and I often found ourselves buying each other a drink which was a little surprising, as Jeak was a full-fledged camera-man and camera-men were entitled to buy full rounds on their £7 a week if not quite so often as the directors with their private means. But as it turned out, Jeak hadn't got a regular job, he just did an odd day's work here and there at 30s. or so a day, for the GPO or newly-formed Strand or the Travel Association, when they needed an extra camera on the job or their own camera-man was not available or the shooting was a bit tricky and likely to be beyond him. If he got

10 days' work a month I suppose he was lucky. I don't know how long he had been carrying on like that before 1935, several (he'd knocked around with the newsreels before) years, anyway, and finally when John Taylor did give him a permanent job at Realist about 1939 at first he was on a retainer and paid fully only for shooting days. It wasn't till 1940, I think, that he went on a full weekly wage, and could at last relax of 10 years of scraping a day's work here and a day's work there. The reason I mention all this is that a man who will go through all that difficulty and discomfort just to work a film camera must have his heart pretty well engaged in photography. And that is a sufficiently rare thing among camera-men.

At first sight Jeak looks a typical pipe-sucker. He stands on the edge of the company firmly grasping his pipe, listening attentively to the philosophy and witticisms of the company and saying never a word. When, every five minutes or so, he is appealed to or volunteers his contribution to the discussion he sucks his pipe judiciously, pauses, and delivers not (thank heaven) the profound platitude you expect from pipe-suckers but nine times out of ten a wisecrack and usually a very good one. Of all the camera-men I've



The Drawing by M. A.

worked with I've always found Jeak in spite of (or perhaps to a rattlebag like myself because of) his long silences the best possible company on the job and off. On location I always had the feeling that Jeak would have liked his little bit of comfort, the good hotel and a five-course meal, if he had his choice and no one can be sturdier than Jeak once he digs his toes in. But if it helped the job for us to stop in an unemployed mill-girl's cottage or a town that was being raided every night or in boozing trawlermen's company, then Jeak would cheerfully acquiesce and make a very good best of it. In fact I've never known him unreasonable at any time or in any way. If he thought a set-up needed four 2-kws and a couple of arcs, and all we had (and it was all we usually had) was four 500s and a few photo-floods, then Jeak would set to and make the best of it. And never a told-you-so if the stuff was not so hot. Considering how few demands Jeak has ever made it may be a little surprising that the quality of photography he has turned out year after year on features or instructional, is the very best there is in documentary or indeed on the level with the best in the British film business.

Jeak's secret perhaps is that he learned to use his lean years of unemployment and part-employment. Sitting around at Realist day after day with no work to do he never seemed bored or at a loss. Usually he had a light meter in process of conversion to his own requirements, the photo-cell covered with criss-cross bits of adhesive tape. Or he'd be ploughing his way through all the British and foreign technical journals for ATC abstracts or his own satisfaction. Or sometimes, like the yokel—he'd just sit. The result was that when you did go out shooting with Jeak he was the quickest, best, easiest-to-get-on-with camera-man I've ever worked with. The arty boys make a lot of fuss about full discussion between director and camera-man about the exact purpose of the film and artistic meaning of the shot and no doubt where most camera-men are not interested in their trade or aching only to be directors that sort of thing is very necessary. But with Jeak the barest word or two and he's got the idea perfectly. It may be that, unusual in the film business, he can and does read. Or it may be that, as the merry company babbles away, there's a lot going on in a quiet way behind those pebble glasses.

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NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Early Diagnosis of Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis. Nucleus with Simpl. for COI and Min of Health. *Technical Advisers:* R. MacKeith, E. Howlett Kellahe. *Medical Director:* Brian Stanford. *Camera:* Derek Stewart.

(Reprinted by kind permission of the 'Lancet')

MENTION of action proposed by a Ministry, particularly where this involves Treasury authority, brings to mind a picture of long delays, punctuated by interdepartmental memoranda. The Ministry of Health is to be congratulated on having abjured such routine in making its film for doctors on poliomyelitis. This film was conceived only on the sixth of August; the idea was offered to the Ministry on the seventh; and on the eleventh the Treasury agreed to meet its cost. The Ministry of Health referred to the Central Office of Information, which handles film-making for Government departments, and a unit was commissioned to undertake the work. On the twelfth a final conference was held at the Ministry and the shooting script was decided; and that same day filming started. Three days later this was completed; and, from the end of August, the film is obtainable in all parts of the country, with projector and projectionist, from the regional offices of the Central Office of Information, for showing to medical audiences.

The film, entitled *Early Diagnosis of Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis*, was made with the help of Dr W. H. Kellahe, invoked as a consultant by the Ministry, and of Dr R. C. MacKeith, who acted as adviser to the unit, which is directed by Dr Brian Stanford. With a running-time of about fifteen minutes, it opens with a graphic demonstration of the recent age-incidence of cases in London hospitals. After brief mention of the usual presenting symptoms (headache, fever, vomiting) it goes on to portray the common early signs: cranial-nerve palsies are beautifully illustrated, as also are the methods of eliciting spasm of the muscles of neck, back and limbs; a word is spared, too, for early changes in tendon reflexes. Then comes a demonstration of lumbar-puncture technique, followed by brief observations on methods of disposal of faeces, precautions by the attendant, isolation of doubtful cases, and methods of spread; finally practitioners are adjured to notify cases, and when in doubt to consult the MOH.

Though the film is intended for the general practitioner there are no shots calculated to help him specifically in his encounter with the disease in the home—apart from one showing a housewife protecting her food from flies, and another portraying a doubtful case comfortably isolated in a garden. The practitioner would welcome some suggestion of the time-sequence, which would lend itself to visual presentation. Perhaps, too, he would like an explanation of how the attendant precautionary steps, illustrated in the film by masked and gowned nurses and doctors, are to be applied in the home; and especially he wants to know what advice to give the families of established or unproven cases. As a rule he will not be undertaking lumbar puncture. If the diagnosis is in doubt (and it is on this score that the film advises the procedure) he is likely to refer the patient to hospital. Always, except

occasionally deep in the country, lumbar puncture should be undertaken in hospital, where the risk of infection can be minimized: this is made clear in the spoken commentary which accompanies the film.

Minor Electrical Repairs

The Electric Iron

The Generation of Electricity

The Transmission of Electricity

Merton Park for BEDA. *Producers:* F. A. Hoare and Winifred Holmes. *Directors:* Graham Murray and Neil Brown. *Cameras:* Charles Marlborough and H. Hall. *Scripts:* Neil Brown. *Animation:* T. R. Thumwood. *Distribution:* BEDA. 10 min. each.

Minor Electrical Repairs shows how replacing a fuse and repairing a broken flex can be simply done and gives reasons for the procedures. *The Electric Iron* is divided into two parts: how the iron works and how to use it, and includes a very clear explanation of the thermostatic control. *The Generation of Electricity* relates the movement of a magnet in a coil to generators and power stations, while the *Transmission of Electricity* carries on the story, describing how a

transformer works and how current is distributed over the country by the grid.

In each film the solid teaching is well done by the animation. What is not so happy is the way the pill has been sugared. It looks as if the producers could not make up their minds whether to go all out for a full film technique or whether to confine themselves to a simple informational method. The idea of the family coping with the broken wire is itself quite good, but it is clumsily related to the ghost voice giving its explanations and exhortations; in fact, as treated, it is appallingly smug and irritating. Part One of the electric iron, on the other hand, is a straightforward instructional film which achieves its purpose, but Part Two is rather the salesman demonstrating his latest model.

The films will certainly be welcome in schools: their best points are that they deal with one subject at a time and that they avoid, albeit somewhat clumsily, the sledgehammer blows of verbal logic. They constitute an interesting experiment at a time when experiments are badly needed, and thus make a valuable contribution to the still small supply of films made directly for the classroom.

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(Contd. from p. 154)

action in many places is confused and obscure. Taken as a whole, for overseas audiences, the film lasts too long; but there is fascinating material here for a shortened version which, omitting the background, would deal only with the Danish people under the Occupation and the sabotage work of the Underground movement.

The Playhouse. Sunday evening

Films from Britain, France and Italy

1. Antarctic Whale Hunt (Britain. 11 mins.)

Theme. The work of the whaling fleet in the Antarctic.

Comment. This film, one of 'This Modern Age' series, has some fine action shooting of the harpooning of whales and of their processing in factory ships to provide important sources of food and other materials urgently needed today.

2. Henri Matisse (France. 40 mins.)

Theme. The life and work of the French painter, Matisse.

Comment. Films about art are nearly always unsatisfactory. This one comes as close to an explanation of the work of a painter as it would seem possible to do. Covering the whole development of Matisse's work, and including some shots of the artist himself, the most interesting sequences are those which show how he builds up his ideas from the initial conception to the final result, and are a record posterity may value. The most irritating part of the film is the atmosphere of reverence and adoration created by the commentary.

3. Paise (Italy. 120 mins.)

Theme. Episodes showing the interaction between the Italian people and the Allied armies during the invasion of Italy.

Comment. This film, a multi-lingual full-length feature documentary provided a magnificent finale to the Festival. Directed by Rosellini, whose *Rome, Open City* has already been seen in this country, the film consists of a series of short stories with no continuity link other than that of the Allied armies' advance from the South to the North. Each of these incidents, with its cunningly contrived twist, is constructed with a vivid realism, which is as brilliant as it is terrifying. With only a handful of material, Rosellini compresses into the space of two hours a range of human emotion which makes *Paise* an unforgettable experience, and one of the screen's greatest achievements. *Paise* is too important a film to be discussed briefly. A fuller review must await its hoped for theatrical showing.

CORRESPONDENCE

DEAR SIR,

Your October issue included amongst its contents an article bearing the title 'The Miller's Aim'. It was written by an enemy of our country. Yes, an enemy; for in my eyes, like millions of Englishmen, the Bosch will remain an enemy. Let us not forget that period of horror and misery, 1939—1944.

This Bosch is complaining not only of the German film industry, but seemingly about ours also. I request him, as far as our industry is concerned, to keep his nose well and truly out; it has nothing whatsoever to do with him. Many people, I am sure, will join with me in this request.

Complete monopoly, like nationalization, is something to keep well clear of. Take away competition in any business, and you destroy that very vital thing, ambition. Destroy ambition and you destroy life, for every man jack of us lives on ambition. In this country today, we are producing films far surpassing the products of Hollywood: films made by the J. Arthur Rank Organization. Very different from the 'quickies' of 1932—1939, before Mr Rank took such an active interest. Today our industry is respected in many countries. In fact, even Englishmen are beginning to respect us, and that is really something. That being the case, I think the term 'Monopolist Miller' used by our German friend, ridiculous and most certainly insulting. If Arthur Rank has proposed the plan suggested to the British Control Commission, and if it will promote a new democracy in Germany, then I say 'Thank heaven', for democracy is a fine thing.

May I also remind the German writer that we won the war, defeated Germany. Had the boot been on the other foot, I am certain no Englishman would have been given the opportunity to complain about anything. Nobody could complain as a prisoner in one of the Nazi 'horror' camps. Could the citizens of London and Coventry complain as they saw their dear and loved ones crushed to death during the blitz? Crushed to death by Germans. Let us not forget.

You have my full permission to publish the above if you so desire. In fact I would esteem it a favour if you do.

Yours faithfully,

ERIC LESLIE (ERIC T. ASBURY),
Managing Director

Leslie Laurence Productions Ltd.
29 Whitcomb Street, London, WC2
October 23rd, 1947

AN APOLOGY

The article 'Denmark and Film' in our last issue was Mr Elton's introduction to *Documentary in Denmark*, a catalogue of films shortly to be issued by Statens Filmcentral, 1 Dahlerupsgade, Copenhagen, we apologize to the publishers and the Danish Government for any inconvenience or misunderstanding caused by its pre-publication in *DNL*.

THE UNIT WITHIN

Realist Film Unit has been making documentary and instructional films since 1937. During the last two years a Unit under the Educational Supervision of Dorothy Grayson, B.Sc., has completed ten classroom films. This 'unit within' is now preparing, shooting or completing eight films.

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CORRESPONDENCE

from RALPH KEENE

THE DEATH OF MAJOR DOCUMENTARIES?

SIR: I wonder if technicians in the documentary and shorts side of the industry fully realize what will be the effect of the application of the new feature rates to 'films over 3,000 ft in length intended for theatrical distribution'? So far as I can see it will mean the death of the major documentary. I do not think that any Government or industrial sponsor will be able to meet the enormously increased production costs; nor will it be possible at these rates to make good quality, 4-5 reel 'featurettes' on a commercial basis.

This company recently had to budget a 4-reel, theatrical-release film for COI. It was overseas production and the new feature rates added £2,300 to the wages bill alone (the cameraman would have been drawing £53 a week!). The result, of course, was that the film was cancelled as a 4-reeler. Yet this production only called for a location unit of four people, plus the normal editing staff. Goodness knows what the increased costs would be on a production requiring electricians, sound crew, sync., camera, etc. And wages aren't the only factor involved. BFPA conditions, I understand, call for a minimum unit of fourteen people for silent location shooting! It is madness to suppose that documentary can stand such rates and conditions.

Unfortunately, the wording of the relevant clause (4a) in the shorts agreement is somewhat ambiguous. It says 'When employees are required to work on any film of over 3,000 feet intended for normal commercial distribution through a renting company, they shall receive as a minimum the salaries and work under conditions laid down in the agreement between the British Film Producers Association and the Association of Cine-Technicians'. ASFP maintain that 'BFPA agreement' here means the one that was in operation at the date of the signing of the shorts agreement (May 22nd, 1946). They say, not without reason, that ASFP would not have signed a blank cheque for all future BFPA agreements, in the negotiating of which they have no voice. ACT on the other hand, maintain that the new feature rates and conditions automatically apply as from the date of the signing of the new BFPA agreement. So, for the present, there is deadlock. As far as I know, no major documentaries are being made, and Films Division have said that none will be commissioned at the new rates.

Now is this a good thing for documentary? . . . or for its public? . . . or for its technicians? Personally I think it is disastrous, for the following reasons:

(1) Major documentaries like *Target for Tonight*, *World of Plenty*, *Today and Tomorrow*, *The Way We Live*, are a vitally important part of our national and social film propaganda programmes. They make a far greater impression on audiences than the average 1-2 reeler, and have done invaluable service in raising the prestige and public appreciation of documentary.

(2) Their disappearance would leave the market wide open for the cheap, irresponsible 4-reel quickie, which we should be doing our best to keep off the screen.

(3) From the technician's point of view it is the major documentary which gives him the chance to express himself on a bigger canvas, and thereby enlarge the scope and power of a film's message. And if, as I predict, the application of the new feature rates means the end of major documentaries, then all our technicians will be permanently on shorts rates—without any hope of the increases they have enjoyed from time to time in the past when making this type of film at the old feature rates.

Much of the confusion arises from the fact that, under the present Quota Act, all films over 3,000 ft. in length are classed together in the same category. But, in their costs, their length, their earning capacity, their purpose and the conditions of their production, the 4-5 reel documentary is an entirely different proposition from the commercial, second-feature—or 'B' class—entertainment picture.

As one way out of this unhappy impasse it

should be possible to create a new category of film to include the theatrical documentary and the better type of 'featurette'. It is not practical to legislate on a basis of 'quality', 'purpose' or 'merit'; but it might be possible to arrive at a definition on 'costs' and 'length'—e.g. all films over 3,000, but under 6,000 ft. in length, and costing not more than £25,000, to be classed as 'intermediaries', and made at the old feature rates.

I would like to urge technicians in our branch of the industry to give themselves furiously to think, if they do not want to be condemned, for the future, to making nothing bigger or better than 2-reelers. One last word. . . . If a situation is allowed to develop under which no major documentaries can be made, it is inevitable that many of our senior technicians, feeling themselves frustrated, will move into feature production.

And would that be a good thing for documentary?

Yours faithfully,

RALPH KEENE MANAGING DIRECTOR
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1948

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This photograph shows the interior of the theatre at
GUILD HOUSE, EDINBURGH
where many of the Festival shows were held

NORMAN WILSON

has written for us
this account of the
growth of the

EDINBURGH FILM GUILD

WHATEVER measure of success the Edinburgh Film Guild has achieved is not due to any privileged position or unusual wealth. This suggestion of peculiar advantages enjoyed by Edinburgh rather hurts our Scots pride. The facts are, the Film Guild was founded some eighteen years ago when 'intelligent' filmgoing was not so popular as it now is. We were among the pioneers and we virtually had to create an audience. We lectured, argued, preached, bullied. It was hard

work, sometimes dispiritingly hard work in the early days.

We were young in those days and naturally poor. But we took risks and bravely put on films like *Caligari* and *Rein que les Heures*, in the hope that we'd scrape together enough members to pay the costs. We even ran bazaars to help the funds! Somehow or other we got through the first difficult years without going bankrupt—and without making any concession to popular appeal.

Our programmes were often 'difficult'. They included all the work of the *avant garde*, the early Russians and a strong infusion of documentary—in the days when it was a heady and exotic brew.

In addition to our shows, we brought up the film-makers themselves to talk about what they were aiming at. Grierson, Wright, Cavalcanti will tell you they had a better platform and a better Press in Edinburgh than they had in London.

We started film shows for children and once they were established handed them over to the Scottish Educational Film Association. We disliked the original set-up of the British Film Institute and initiated the moves which led to the setting up of the Scottish Film Council.

From the beginning, we believed that the object of a film society was not merely to provide 'unusual' films for the snobs who regarded ordinary filmgoing as a form of intellectual slumming. We actually *liked* the cinema, cheap, vulgar and shoddy as it was; we also realized its potentialities as a medium of expression and its powers as a social influence. Instead of sitting aloof in a private and precious world of *avant garde* art, we felt that our job was in the cinema and among the people.

We therefore organized support for whatever worth-while films the trade had to offer. We played up the directors and producers who mattered. We made friends with the renters and the exhibitors.

How hard we worked!

We helped to establish the first British Federation of Film Societies and when that was a failure we formed the Federation of Scottish Film Societies, which has now operated successfully for over ten years. We sponsored the formation of the Edinburgh Scientific Film Society, now probably the largest in the country. We have put on special shows for Government Departments, for the City Corporation and for various other organizations whose use of films we thought it worth while to encourage.

We have helped in many and devious ways to stimulate the production of films in Scotland and we have helped and encouraged everyone who has come to Scotland to make films. We arranged the first Exhibition of Film Decor, held in the august precincts of the National Gallery of Scotland. And lastly we organized, with the help

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DANISH FILMS

Denmark Grows Up. Production: Nordisk Films Kompagni. Direction: Hagen Hasselbach, Astrid Henning-Jensen, Søren Melson. Photography: Verne Jensen, Annelise Reenberg, etc. Music: Erik Fiehn.

Health for Denmark. Production: Palladium. Direction: Torben Svendsen. Script: Arthur Elton. Photography: Erik Olsen. Music: Paul Schierbeck.

The Seventh Age. Production: Palladium. Direction: Torben Svendsen. Script: Carl Dreyer. Photography: Karl Andersson. Music: Emil Reesen.

For so long have we in Britain been isolated from any real contact with the rest of Europe, that the extent to which the documentary movement has progressed in other countries in the past few years has hardly yet been realized. Reports from travellers abroad and an occasional film have given some indication of what is happening, but, with the exception of Czechoslovakia—a cross section of whose films were seen at the Czech Festival earlier this year—difficulties in obtaining foreign films have effectively prevented any serious or detailed study of documentary developments overseas.

Contd. from previous page

of an advisory committee which included Paul Rotha representing FDFU and Basil Wright from ASFP, the first International Festival of Documentary Film.

If this reads like a boasting account of achievements, it is not written with that intention. There is nothing we have done that couldn't have been done elsewhere by dint of hard work and a continuity of effort. The Edinburgh Film Guild is now the largest film society in the country. It has 2,300 members and by the careful management of its finances—provided entirely by the members' subscriptions—it has built up over the years a fund from which it has been possible to purchase its own premises which contain offices, library, meeting rooms and a charming little theatre, with both 35 mm and 16 mm projectors. Opened this year, it is hoped that Film House will become a real film centre from which the activities of the Guild will continue to expand and increase. It is the work that has been done that matters but it is difficult to be completely impersonal and no reference to the Edinburgh Film Guild would be complete without some mention of the officials who run it. There is no façade of honorary office-bearers whose names might add dubious lustre to the Council. All its members have been elected because they have a genuine, almost a passionate interest in films—people like Forsyth Hardy, known to everyone in documentary as a sound critic and able negotiator; Alan Harper of Campbell Harper Films, Cyril Ramsay Jones of the Central Office of Information; Rhona Inch Morrison, a well-known architect, who was once with the GPO Film Unit; and Frank MacLauchlan, who as Hon Treasurer has performed wonders with the Guild's finances. The fact that most of these officials have worked together for many years has meant a constancy and continuity of policy which has insured both stability and progress.

In the case of Denmark, although since the war there has been an increasing contact between film makers of the two countries, to most people the importance, or even the existence, of the documentary movement there is virtually unknown. These three films—the first examples of Danish work with an English commentary to reach this country—are therefore of exceptional interest.

Planned as part of a series dealing with the Danish Social Services, the films cover respectively the fields of Child Welfare, the Hospital Services, and the Care of the Aged. These are fields in which Denmark has every right to be proud of her achievements, and the films have obviously been designed with an eye to overseas distribution. It would be misleading, however, to imply that they are propagandist in outlook. Indeed one of the outstanding features of these films is the restraint and moderation with which the story is told. In places the commentary is frankly critical, and there is no attempt to impress the viewer with glittering accounts of the best—some of the most attractive institutions are, for example, immediately classified as not typical—and in each of the films inadequacies and dissatisfactions are pointed out. This quality of self criticism conveys an impression of honest analysis which carries a real conviction.

Of the three films the best undoubtedly is *The Seventh Age*. It tells first of the way in which old age pensions—adjusted to circumstances of environment and resources—are distributed. In Denmark there is no long trek for the aged to a Post Office. The money is delivered; in country districts by the postman; in towns by special messenger. For those who have no homes of their own, various arrangements are made to provide accommodation, either in flats at a rental they can afford, or in institutions. The film concludes with a picture of life for the aged in a number of different types of institution.

For those in this country who know something of the inadequacies of our own provision for the aged, this film will be a revelation. But it is not only for its description of a social system that this film will be remembered. No words can adequately describe the way in which Torben Svendsen, the director, has translated Carl Dreyer's fine script to the screen. The problems of old age are brought vividly to our minds through the eyes of the old people themselves; here by sheer film craft is caught the beauty and tragedy of old age. By turns serene or troubled, pathetic or gay, this film has a deep understanding of human nature. It is a film every detail of which remains in the memory.

(Contd. top page 164)

THE WORLD IS RICH

GENEVA, AUGUST 27th, 1947

WORLD IS RICH SEEN TODAY BY DELEGATES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF FORTY-EIGHT NATIONS AND EIGHTEEN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. HIGHLY ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION. F.A.O. IS DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO UNITED KINGDOM FOR THIS SUPERB CONTRIBUTION TO INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING.

SIR JOHN BOYD ORR.

Inquiries to the Central Office of Information

length 5 reels

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a Film of Local Government set in the City of Manchester

Inquiries to the Manchester Corporation

length 7 reels

SHORT FILMS

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Inquiries to the Central Office of Information

SHIPSHAPE

for the Royal National
Lifeboat Institution

WATERWORKS

for the British Waterworks
Association

Producers: PAUL ROTH, J.B. HOLMES, JOHN WALES, DUNCAN ROSS
FILMS OF FACT LTD 25 CATHERINE STREET, WC2

(Continued from previous page)

Health for Denmark shows the organization of the Sick Club system, which through a contributory scheme enables its members to get free medical advice and, where necessary, hospital facilities. For the point of view of the patient the film introduces us to a typical Danish family, while the details of organization are seen through the eyes of the tradespeople, who, as directors of the sick club, are responsible for the management and running of the hospital and its allied services.

In exposition this film is less satisfactory than the previous one. The simple story is inadequate to convey more than a superficial impression of the system as a whole, while the devices used to explain the lay-out of the hospital are clumsy and tend to slow up the action. But for its defects the film has compensating qualities. There are sly touches of wit and humour, which give the film a sense of reality all too rare in our native production. What British director in a hospital, for example, would introduce us to the kitchens, the bedpan and the laundry among the panoply of wards, X-ray rooms and operating theatres? And there will be few of us who do not recognize something of themselves in that incorrigible 'youngest'!

Denmark Grows Up, covering the social services available for babies and young children, ranges from the training of midwives, ante natal, maternity and post natal care in rural areas to the organization of nursery and junior schools in the towns. Children the world over are a joy to watch and the directors make the most of their opportunities, but with such a wide field to cover continuity is difficult. The result is a disjointed story in which the details remain less clearly in the mind than with others of the series. For overseas audiences at least, some restriction of scope would have been an advantage; nevertheless the total picture of social achievement which the film presents is impressive. As in the other two the quality of sincerity is striking, and the film again demonstrates the astonishing ability of Danish directors to bring their characters to life.

For all who are concerned with social welfare, these films will provide a valuable introduction to Danish methods of dealing with their problems. Clearly Denmark has done much in her care for the helpless and needy which we in this country should do well to study. But for film makers, too, there is much of a technical interest. Some of the more serious minded will no doubt be irritated by a joy in film craft which in places is almost naive, but few will deny that these films have wit, humanity and a refreshing quality of enthusiasm which is sadly lacking in so many of our own films. And finally, whatever to British eyes may be the defects of construction and exposition the fact remains that these are films about real people. The postman, the cigar merchant, the taxi driver, his wife and family, the farm worker sitting by his wife in labour, the old lady who was a trapeze artist in her heyday—these, and many others too numerous to mention—these are old friends. We meet and know them. These films bring us close to the people of Denmark themselves, to their hopes, their fears and their problems, which are not very different from our own. This, when hatred and misunderstanding are again dividing the people of the world, and when economic restrictions are forcing us back to our island isolation, is important.

Copies of the films may be obtained for private showings by application to the Danish Embassy.

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